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SUBJECT: JORDAN: JANUARY 12 MEDIA REACTION TO GAZA

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¶1. SUMMARY: Accusations that Israel is using white phosphorus in attacking Gaza's populated areas led front-page coverage by Jordan's major news outlets on Monday. King Abdullah's demand that Israel abide immediately by UNSCR 1860 and that the international community "coerce" Israel into doing so topped local coverage. Op-ed commentary looked for U.S. culpability in Israel's offensive. END SUMMARY.

¶2. All major newspapers published today in Jordan ran banner headlines accusing Israel of using white phosphorus in attacking Gaza's most heavily populated areas. Sources included Gaza-based medics and civilians, along with statements by Human Rights Watch representatives to the pan-Arab satellite channel Al-Jazeera. The dailies combined these headlines with the official Jordan News Agency account of King Abdullah's statements during his Sunday meeting in Amman with Palestinian President Abbas, in which he said that Israel "should immediately abide by the Security Council Resolution 1860... and that it is the responsibility of the international community to coerce Israel to implement the Security Council resolution."

¶3. Coverage uniformly included the Jordan News Agency account of Foreign Minister Bashir's meeting with Amman-based ambassadors of the five permanent member states of the UN Security Council. Bashir reportedly conveyed Jordan's condemnation of Israel's ongoing offensive, saying "What we are seeing is a flagrant violation committed by Israel against the international law including its rejection of international resolutions and its indiscriminate and intensive bombardment using internationally banned weapons."

¶4. Newspapers also reported on Sunday's relatively small public protests, highlighting a demonstration yesterday by UNRWA employees in Amman, some of whom carried banners reading "Zionists, Killers of Children" and "We Are All With You Gaza."

¶5. Editorial Commentary

-- "American Partnership in the Aggression on Gaza"

Columnist Nicola Nasser in the January 12 edition of the independent, opposition Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm posits, "This American partnership in the aggression is not just diplomatic, as was evident from the American position last week that prevented the passing of a binding UNSC resolution to immediately halt the aggression. Despite the importance of the American political and media support for the Israeli aggression on Gaza, the military support that does not get sufficient coverage is no less important. The war planes that are killing the children, the women, the elderly and entire families... without distinguishing between civilians and resisters, Hamas and Fatah members, Muslims and Christians... are paid for by the American, European, and Japanese taxpayers.... Not only are those planes that are American-made, but also their phosphorous ammunition and deep-exploding bombs. These are all financed by America and the occupation spends nearly four billion dollars on them from annual American assistance that Washington pays to Tel Aviv."

-- "Gaza Victims and 9/11 Victims"

Columnist Mahjoob Zweiri in the January 12 edition of the independent Arabic daily Al-Ghad reasons, "The political discourse that dominates the analysis of the war on Gaza goes in two clear directions. The first seems to be coordinated in the sense that it focuses on Gaza events as a separate event from what happened before. Therefore, news treatment is crude, highlighting...rocket launches from Gaza as the motive for the war on Gaza.... The second seems to be retroactive in the sense that what is happening is one link in the chain of Israel's assaults against the Palestinian people.... Amidst these two discourses lies a tug-of-war of analyses and observations of the massacre in Gaza. This probably leads us to draw a type of comparison between the reaction to the killing of civilians in Gaza and what happened on September 11, 2001. The killing of around 3,000 unarmed civilians in New York and Washington was seen as unjustified. The response was two wars against two countries, Afghanistan and Iraq, under the moniker of the war on terrorism.... The international community was affected and moved by the images of those civilians, but it has not been moved by the deaths of more than 800 civilians, of whom almost 300 are children, and by the fact that it was killing upon the will of a political entity that is a member of the United Nations bound to respect the so-called international law."

-- "Palestine in the Priority of the Strategic Compass"

Columnist Dr. Amr Hamzawy in today's Al-Ghad opines, "The choice between the option of a peace settlement and the option of armed resistance is a legitimate one, in fact, is required if the strategic compass of Palestinian action is to be determined. Although the growing role of Hamas, which is pro-armed resistance and anti-settlement, has changed the Palestinian internal formula a great deal, the heavy price of Hamas' resistance, which is paid by

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the lives of Palestinian civilians, and its limited impact on the Israeli military machine, and in view of the current unsuitable regional and international circumstances, forces us to look at the conditions of the armed resistance and the issue of balancing between this resistance and the negotiations. This comparison between the two options is the core of the Palestinian issue today. Its determination and conclusion... is dependent on the factions of the Palestinian national movement, especially Fatah and Hamas. This is why it becomes important to begin an immediate serious dialogue among the factions... in order to push towards a binding preference, either for the negotiations, despite the maneuvering involved, or for the armed resistance, despite its heavy cost, and then unite the Palestinian ranks on such preference."

BEECROFT